VisualBin

User manual

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Welcome to VisualBin

VisualBin is designed to **visually organize and categorize your items and assets** into locations and bins. It will help you to find back your items quick and in a natural way by visualizing the location and bin they are stored.

It will let you manage your items lists and signal the items that are overdue. It can produce lists of items that are low in stock. It can keep records about suppliers, warranty expiration dates and stock values.

The program is very versatile and will benefit a broad range of users. Boat owners, campers, collectors, gardeners, just to name a few. The program is also great for maintaining asset lists for insurance purposes.

A few inventory programs on the market offer similar functionality, but none of these offer the versatility, flexibility and **unique visual experience** of VisualBin!

Features

- Visual representation of the locations and bins where your items are stored
- Hotspots on bins for one-click displaying of items stored in that bin
- Items can be easily classified into categories you define
- Totalling function with subtotals per category
- Extensive filtering and searching capabilities
- One-click filtering of low-stock items
- One-click filtering of items that are overdue (e.g. consumption date passed)
- Up to 2GB database size means capacity for tens of thousands of items
- Very flexible user interface, user adaptable
- Sorting on each column by simply clicking the column header
- You decide which columns are shown in the items grid

Prerequisites

Before you install VisualBin, please be sure you have:

- Windows 2000, XP or Vista
- 256 MB RAM or more
- 20 MB free disk space
- At least 800*600 screen solution, 1024 x 768 is better

  VisualBin depends on the Microsoft .Net 2.0 Framework. It comes standard with Vista, and is probably already installed on your XP computer. If not, the installation program will install the .Net 2.0 Framework automatically before VisualBin is installed.

  You can also install the .Net 2.0 Framework yourself before you install VisualBin. The Microsoft .Net 2.0 Framework can be downloaded from the Microsoft website **here**.

It is recommended that you play a little around with the program after the installation so you become familiar with the different functions. Sometimes the handling of the panels like hiding, docking and floating can be a bit confusing in the beginning.

Before using VisualBin, please be sure you have images of the locations you want to use in the program at hand, and the location the images are saved on disk. The format of the images can be *.gif, *.png, *.jpg or *.bmp.

Best size is from about 200 to 700 pixels wide and from about 200 to 400 pixels high, you may want to expiriment with this to best fit your screen resolution and preference. Remember you can hide panels to create more space for your image.

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Before you begin

Before you begin to enter data in VisualBin

Before you begin working with VisualBin we advise a few preparation steps.

1. Read through this help file. It will really help you to understand how things are done in VisualBin as they are done...

2. Play around a little with the demo provided to get aquinted with the program. Create bins and items. Try out the filters. When you are done you can delete the demo location, including the demo bins and items. You can also leave the demo in the database for a while and delete it later.

3. Have images of the locations you want to use in the program at hand, and the location the images are saved on disk. The format of the images can be *.gif, *.png, *.jpg or *.bmp, although *.bmp format is not recommended because of the space it takes in the database.

4. Best size for the images is from about 200 to 700 pixels wide and from about 200 to 400 pixels high, you may want to expiriment with this to best fit your screen resolution and preference. Remember you can hide panels to create more space for your image if you like.

5. Think about what categories you like to organize your items into. Do not be tempted to create too many categories, but also not too few. Typical are 10-20 different categories. Better less than more.

What you can do with VisualBin

What you can do with VisualBin

Applications

- **Boating and cruising:** Visual Bin has been developed with the cruising folks in mind. Pre-paring for a cruise means victualizing and storing perish-able food in different places in the boat. VisualBin not only keeps track of where you have stored your groceries but can also produce a list of food that should be consumed shortly. Keeping track of the places where you stored your tools and spare parts is just another useful feature of VisualBin, as is keeping a register of your charts and pilots.

- **Campers and motor homes:** What goes for boaters goes for campers as well of course.

- **Gardening:** Why not use VisualBin for keeping track of all flora in your garden design so you can easily remember where you planted your tulip bulbs, when it is time to shear the prunia, what month the magnolia will bloom?

- **Wine cellar:** Are you the happy owner of a wine cellar where you keep your precious wine coll-ection? VisualBin will prove to be a great application to keep track of your bottles.

- **Insurance claims:** Insurance companies will always de-mand a list of all items that were lost. Your list should contain as much of the following information as possible:
    - a description of each item
    - where it was purchase
    - when it was purchased
    - the amount you paid
  No need to say that VisualBin can easily produce this information.

The toolbar

The toolbar of VisualBin
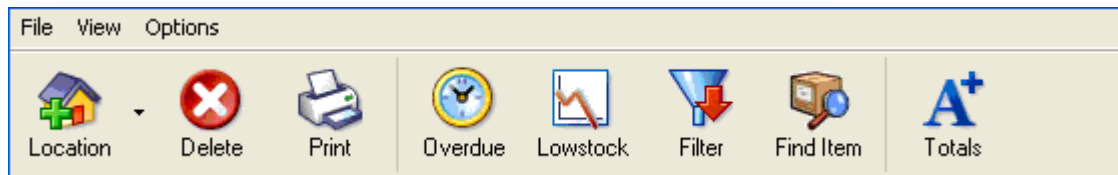
Don't mistake the simple looking toolbar for lack of functionality.

In order to keep things fast and efficient, the toolbar of VisualBin is kept very basic, so all main functions are just one click away. The icons on the toolbar buttons are large and clearly marked so you do not need to find the function you require between a myriad of icons.

But let's introduce briefly the function of every button as they appear on the toolbar in the picture below. A more extensive explaination you will find in the "how-to" sections of this help file. You arrive there by clicking the hyperlinks on this page or by selecting it by the help topic.
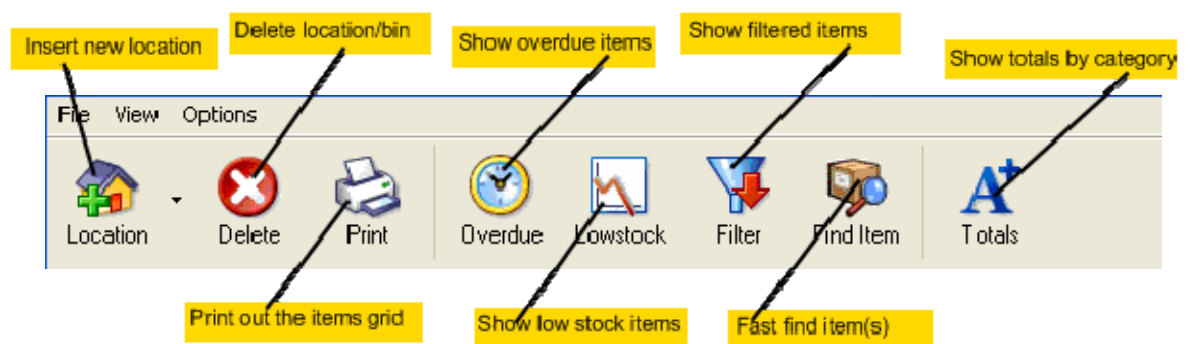
Location

This button you probably will not need very often. The function of the button is to introduce a new location for storing bins and items. By clicking the button a small window opens, asking you to enter the name and the file name of the image you want to use for this location. To avoid unaccidentially clicking the button causing popping up the add location dialog, you must click the little arrow next to the icon whereupon a small drop down menu opens. Clicking on the item confirms you really want to add a new location.

Delete

With the delete button you remove the bin or the location you have selected in the treeview. By removing a bin you also remove all items belonging to that bin. By removing a complete location you also remove all the bins and items belonging to that location.

Print

Clicking the print button will make a print-out of the current items in the items grid. Printing is controlled by the way you have set the printing options, like paper kind, whether you want a preview or not etc.

Overdue

The function under this button is to show all items that are overdue. Overdue items are items of which the expiration date has passed. You can set the expiration date when you enter a new item. If you do not set the expiration date it is set by default to December 31, 9998.

Lowstock

Lowstock items are items of which the item quantity in stock is less than the minimum quantity set for the item.

Filter

The filter function in VisualBin is very powerful. You can filter items on almost all attributes. Once you have defined a filter you can save it for quick next time use.

Find item

If you want to find a specific item quickly by its name or part of its name you use this function.

Totals

Switching on the "totals" function will permanently show totals per category and bin of the current items in the grid.
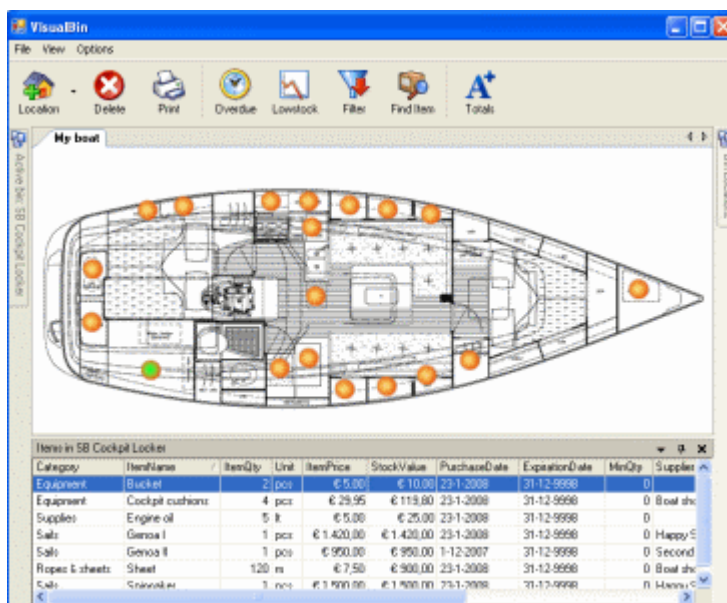
Customizing the user interface

Customizing the user interface

VisualBin is very flexible in how you think you like the user interface most. You can hide panels, close panels, have them float or arrange them as you please.

1. Hide a panel

To hide a panel, you click the pushpin in the header bar of the panel.

In the example above, both the Data Entry panel and the Bin Locations panel are hidden. You can unhide them by clicking on the tab at the side of the window. Doing this, the panel shows, but it hides again after it looses focus. If you want to keep it docked you need to click the pushpin again.

2. Floating panels

To make a panel float, you double-click on the header bar of the panel. You can resize the panel and drag it to a place on the screen where it is out of the way. If you want it back again docked to to place where it came from, just double-click the header again.
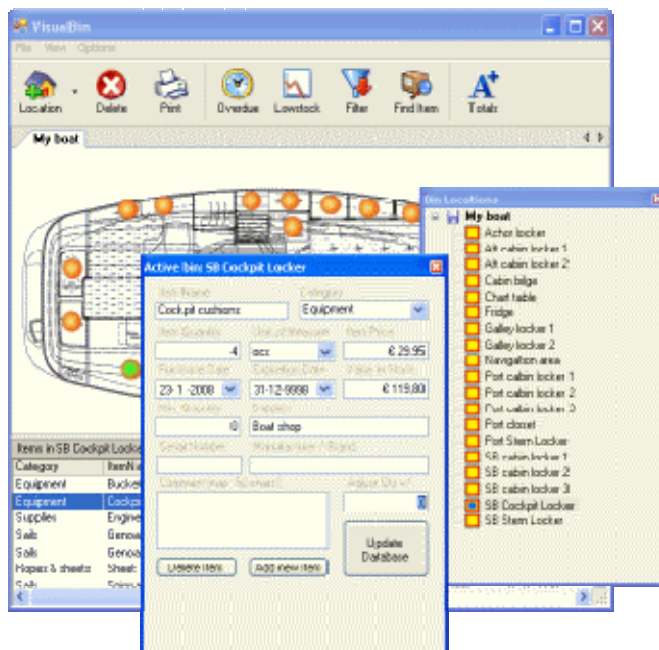
In the example above both the Data Entry panel and the Bin Locations panel are floating.

3. Re-arranging panels (docking to another side of the main window)

If you are not happy with the panel arrangement, you may want to re-arrange the panels, e.g. you want the Data Entry panel at the right and the Bin Locations treeview at the left. Or something else. Up to you.

To make re-arranging panels a smooth operation, VisualBin helps you with visual aids. These docking aids are shown within the red circles in the example below.
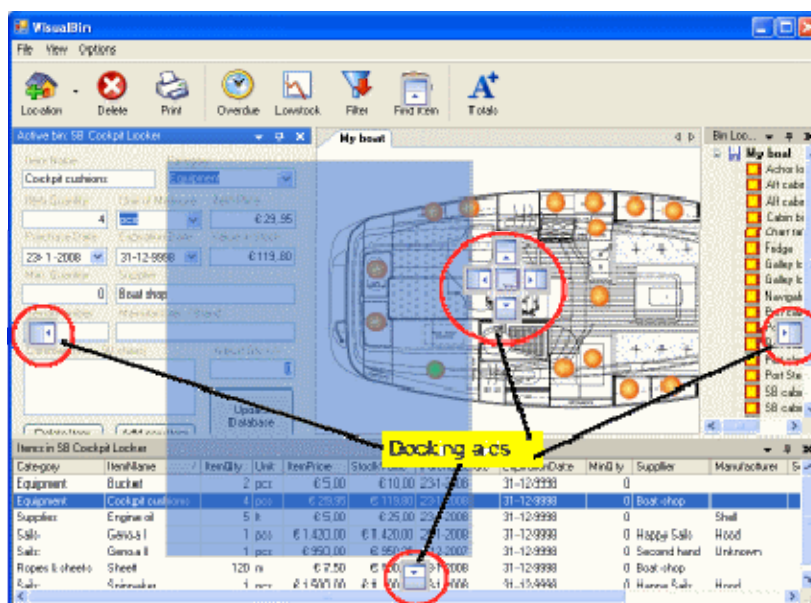
This is how it works. Suppose you want the Data Entry form docked to the right side of the main window next to the Bin Locations panel. To do this, you grab the header of the panel and start dragging. A blue shadow and the docking aids occurs. Keep dragging until your cursor is on the right side handle of the docking aid, that is, the docking aid with the 4 handles, in the middle.

If you wanted it to be at the right side of both the Bin Locations AND the Items Grid, you would have moved the panel to the docking aid all at the right.

4. Closing a panel

You can close a panel by clicking the cross in the header of the panel. To re-open the panel, select it from the "View" menu. It will re-open in the same place as where it was closed.

5. Resizing panels

All panels can be resized by placing the cursor exactly on the border of a panel until a dragging handle appears. Drag to move the border.

6. Persistency

When you close VisualBin, it will remember the arrangement of the panels. Next time you start VisualBin all panels will appear in the same arrangement as when you closed the program.

![icon] The data entry form

The data entry form

This panel you use to add items to the database, to delete items from the database and to change items.

The bar at the top has 3 small icons: a downpointing arrow, a pushpin and a cross.

Currently the arrow has no function.

Clicking the cross will close the panel, clicking the pushpin will hide the panel. You can move the panel around by clicking/holding the left mouse button on the blue bar at the top and dragging the panel around (see also **customizing the user interface**).

The form has a number of input fields and 3 buttons. There are 3 types of fields requiring your input: **plain input boxes, combo boxes and calendars.**

Plain input boxes are "Item Name", Item Quantity", "Item Price", "Value in Stock", "Min. Quantity", "Supplier", "Serial Number", "Manufacturer/Brand", "Comments" and "Adjust Qty". They can only be used for typing in data.

Combo boxes are "Category" and "Unit of measure". They are called combo box because they can both be used for typing in data as for selecting data by pulling them open. You pull a combobox open by clicking the downpointing arrow on the right side of the box.

Calendars are a special type of combo box. You can straight type in a date, or pull them open and select a date from the calender that opens. Calendars are "Purchase date" and "Expiration Date". Both are filled with default dates the moment you add a new item. For Purchase Date this is the current date (today), for Expiration Date it is December 31, 9998.

To **add a new item** to the currently selected bin (as indicated in the bar at the top) you click the "Add new item" button. The input cursor is automatically set to the first input field, "Item Name". Use the tab key to proceed to the next field. Using the tab key has also the advantage that the field gets selected and you can just overtype the value in that field, without having to clear it first.

Observe that using the tab key in the calendar fields, the input cursor proceeds to the next attribute (month, day, year) within the date field. It is advised to play around a bit with the calendar controls to get used to them.

The money fields should show your local currency. If that is not the case please check the currency settings in your version of Windows.

To **delete the current item** you click of course the Delete button. VisualBin will ask for a confirmation if you have checked the appropriate option.
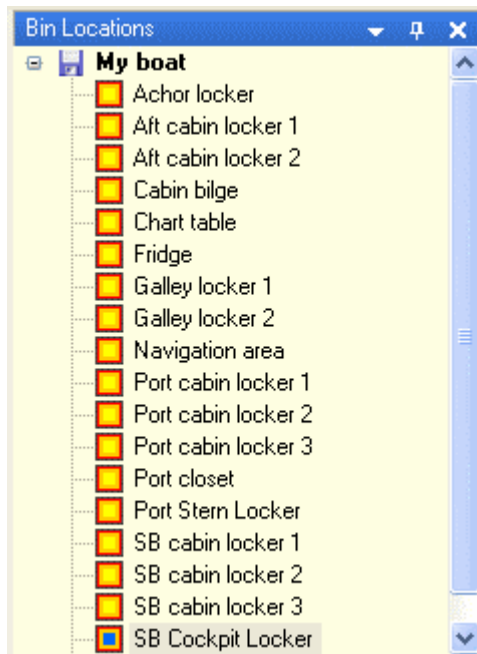
To save the new or modified item you click the "Update Database" button. If you fail to do this the item will not be saved.

🗄️ The Bin Locations panel (treeview)

The bin and locations panel

This panel shows all your locations and bins you have defined in the form of a two level treeview.

The blue bar at the top has 3 small icons: a downpointing arrow, a pushpin and a cross.

Currently the arrow has no function.

Clicking the cross will close the panel, clicking the pushpin will hide the panel. You can move the panel around by clicking/holding the left mouse button on the blue bar at the top and dragging the panel around (see also **customizing the user interface**).

The name of the locations is shown in bold, with a little disc as icon.

Below the location the bins belonging to that location are shown, with a yellow square as icon. If you select a bin by clicking on the name the icon will receive a blue center highlight, as shown by the bin at the bottom (SB Cockpit Locker).

Observe that the bin also gets selected when you click the bin hotspot in the image, and also when you have used the "Find" function from the toolbar to indicate the bin where the searched item was found.

The items grid panel

The items grid panel

This panel shows the items you have selected, either by selecting a bin or by filtering.

Category	ItemName	ItemQty	Unit	ItemPrice	StockValue	PurchaseDate	ExpirationDate	MinQty	Supplier	Mar
Equipment	Bucket	2	pcs	€ 5,00	€ 10,00	23-1-2008	31-12-9998	0		
Equipment	Cockpit cushions	4	pcs	€ 29,95	€ 119,80	23-1-2008	31-12-9998	0	Boat shop	
Supplies	Engine oil	5	lt	€ 5,00	€ 25,00	23-1-2008	31-12-9998	0		She
Sails	Genoa I	1	pcs	€ 1.420,00	€ 1.420,00	23-1-2008	31-12-9998	0	Happy Sails	Hoc
Sails	Genoa II	1	pcs	€ 950,00	€ 950,00	1-12-2007	31-12-9998	0	Second hand	Unk
Ropes & sheets	Sheet	120	m	€ 7,50	€ 900,00	23-1-2008	31-12-9998	0	Boat shop	
Sails	Spinnaker	1	pcs	€ 1.500,00	€ 1.500,00	23-1-2008	31-12-9998	0	Happy Sails	Hoc

The blue bar at the top has 3 small icons: a downpointing arrow, a pushpin and a cross.

Currently the arrow has no function.

Clicking the cross will close the panel, clicking the pushpin will hide the panel. You can move the panel around by clicking/holding the left mouse button on the blue bar at the top and dragging the panel around (see also **customizing the user interface**).

You can decide which columns are shown in the grid. You do this in the "Settings and Options" form you can open by slelecting the "Options" menu item in the main menu of VisualBin.

Besides, you have several possibilities to tweak the grid.

1. To **sort** the grid on a specific column, click the column header
2. To **resize** a column, grab the handle between two column headers and drag left or right
3. To **move** a column, drag the column header to the place you want the column

These tweaks are not persistent between different item selections.

To select an item in the grid for updating, just click the item row in question and all item data will appear in the Data Entry form, ready to change.

How to add a new location

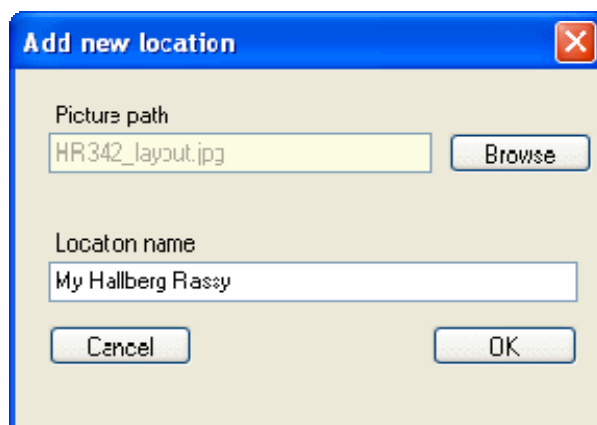**How to add a new location to the database**

Adding a new location to the database requires an image of the location you want to add. The format of the images may be *.gif, *.png, *.jpg or *.bmp. The size should be somewhere between 200 x 700 pix for best results. Just try these things out by adding the location, and if you don't like it, delete it, resize it with a graphics program and try again.

We also recommend some compressed format (*.gif, *.png, or *.jpg) for the picture since *.bmp files take a lot of space in the database.

To add a new location click the little arrow next to the "Location" button on the toolbar and then click the "Add new location" text.
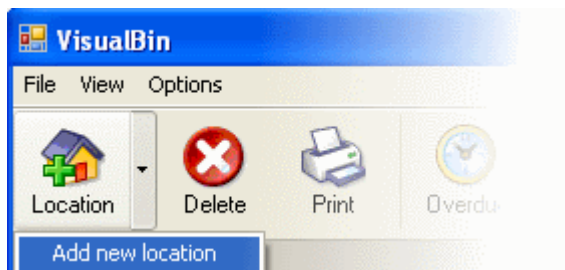
A new dialog box will open, asking you for the location on disk of the image you want to use for this location, and the name you like to give to the location. With the "Browse" button you open a file dialog enabling you to find the file quickly.

Clicking the "OK" button will add the location, including the image to the database.

Check if the image fits the canvas and if you are satisfied with the result you can proceed to add bins to the newly added location.
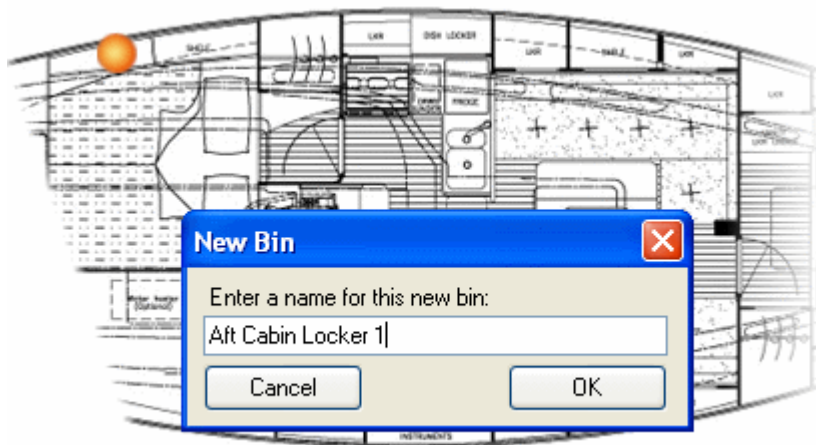
How to add a new bin

How to add a new bin to the active location

Adding a new bin to a location is very easy.

Just click in the image on the spot where you want to define the new bin. A new hotspot appears and a small dialog pops up asking for the name of the new bin.

After confirming by clicking the OK button on the dialog, the bin is added to the database. It will appear as a hotspot on the image and also in the Bin Locations panel.

Observe that you can move the hotspot by dragging if it is not exactly in the place you want it to be.

![icon] How to add new items

How to add new items to the database

Adding new items to the database is done via the **Data Entry form**. To add a new item click the "Add new item" button. The data entry fields will clear and the cursor will be set in the item name field.

You fill in field by field. Use the tab key to proceed to the next field. The only field that is obligatory is the item name field. Just fill in the fields you require for this item. You can leave the other fields alone if you do not need them, and save the item to the database by clicking the "Update Database" button.

Some fields deserve a bit more elaboration. Like the "Category" field.

The Category field is a so called "Combo box", meaning that you can type in data directly or you can make a selection from a drop-down menu.

The first time you define a category for your item the category name is saved in the database and added to the drop-down menu.

So next time you want to add an item to the same category you do not need to type in the name of the category again, but you can just pick it from the drop-down menu.

The calendar fields are also designed as "Combo box", so you can type in a date directly in the box.

However, when you open the box a calendar pops up where you can select a date by clicking different areas. These areas are indicated with a red arrow in the example provided.

- Click on the name of the month to select another month.
- Click on the year and you can type or select a year.
- With the left and right arrows in the calendar header you can scroll through the month of the year.
- Clicking on "Today" ("Vandaag" in the example) will bring you to the current date.
- Clicking a day will set the date in the textbox.

How to retrieve items

How to retrieve items from the database

Retrieving items from the database can be done in different ways, depending on which search and select criteria you want to use.

The following methods are available to you to retrieve data.
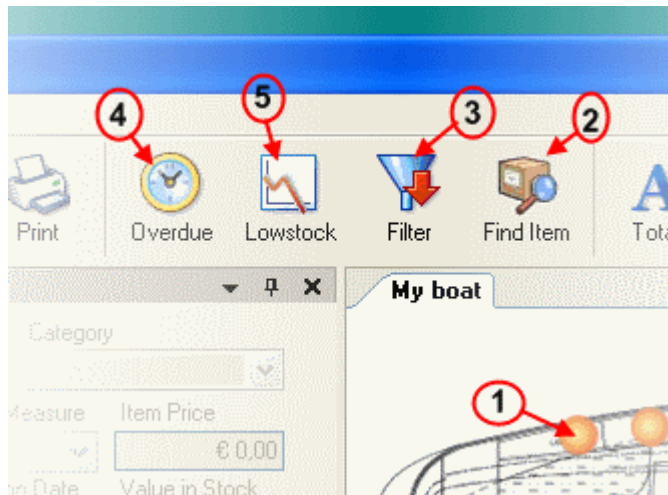
1. Clicking a bin

By clicking a bin, either in the Bin Locations tree or on a hotspot in the image, all items belonging to that bin are fetched from the database and shown in the items grid.

2. Quick find button

If you want to find a specific item quickly by its name or part of its name you use this button. You do not need to know the name of the item(s) you are looking for. Just type part of the name, e.g. if you want to find "butterscotch" just type "scotch". It will not only find your butterscotch but also the fine bottle you have hidden under the starboard berth...

3. Filter button

The filter function in VisualBin is very powerful. You can filter items on almost all attributes. Once you have defined a filter you can save it for next time you need the same filter.

4. Overdue button

The function under this button is to show all items that are overdue. Overdue items are items of which the expiration date has passed. You can set the expiration date when you enter a new item. If you do not set the expiration date it is set by default to December 31, 9998.

5. Lowstock button

Lowstock items are items of which the item quantity in stock is less than the minimum quantity set for the item.

All methods will retrieve items and show these in the **items grid**.

How to use the filter

How to use the filter

The filter window opens when clicking the filter button [Filter icon] **Filter** on the toolbar.

You can use the filter to retrieve items on filter criteria you set in this window.

On top there is a combo-box with all filters you have defined already. If you want to re-use it, just select the filter you want and click the "Filter!" button. The filtered items will be shown in the items grid.

You can of course delete obsolete filters with the "Delete Filter" button.

To set the filter criteria click the checkbox next to the arguments you want to filter on, and type the values you want to filter on in the text boxes.

Then you select the operator to use with the radio buttons:

- **<** less than the value in the text box
- **=** equal to the value in the text box
- **>** greater than the value in the text box
- **~** like the value in the text box

If you also want to save this filter, check the "Save this filter" box. Now click the "Filter!" button.

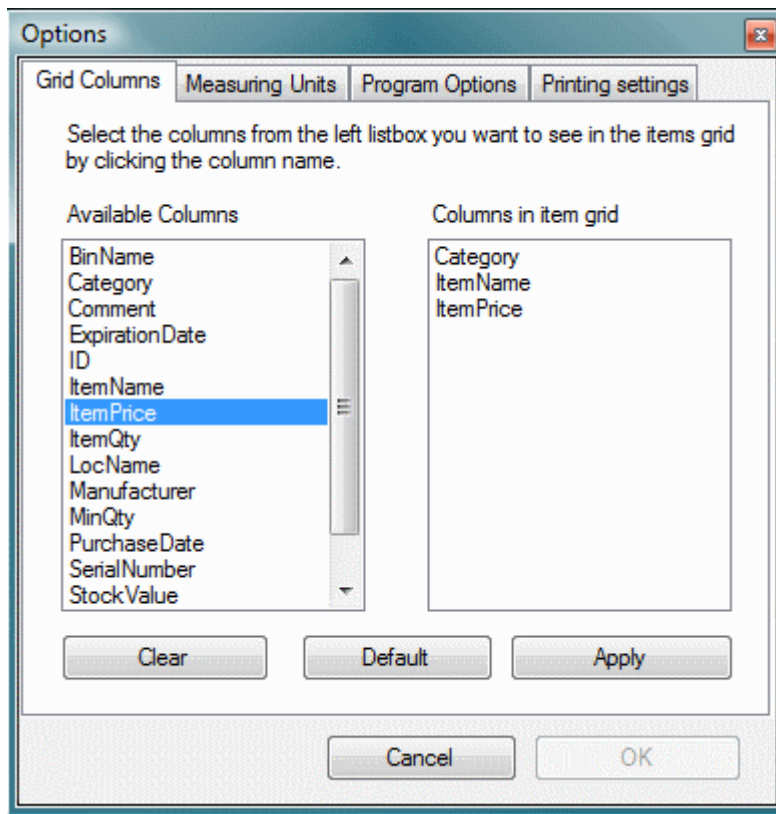The example left filters all "Food" with a price over 10 euros.
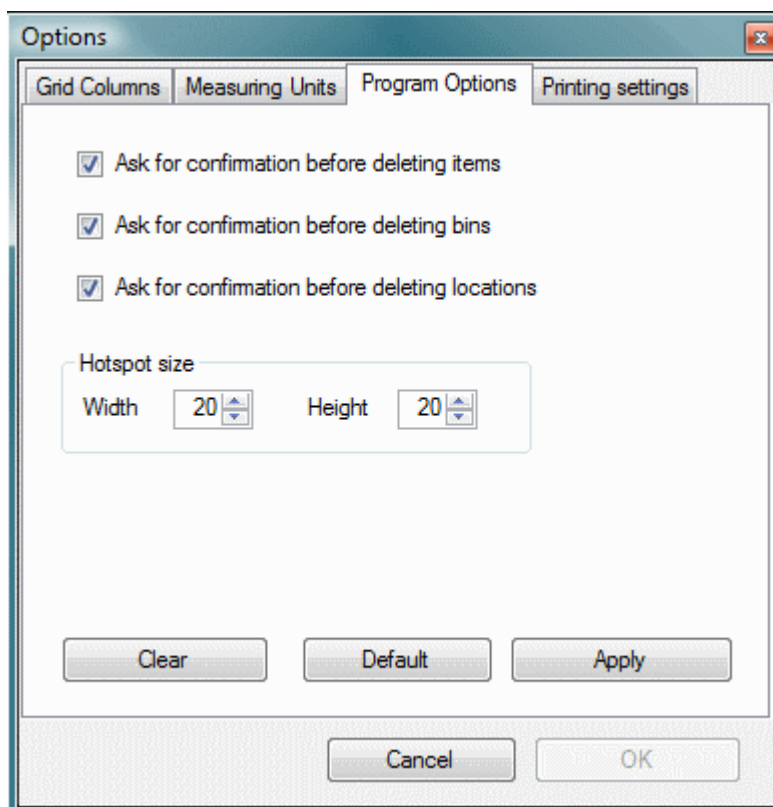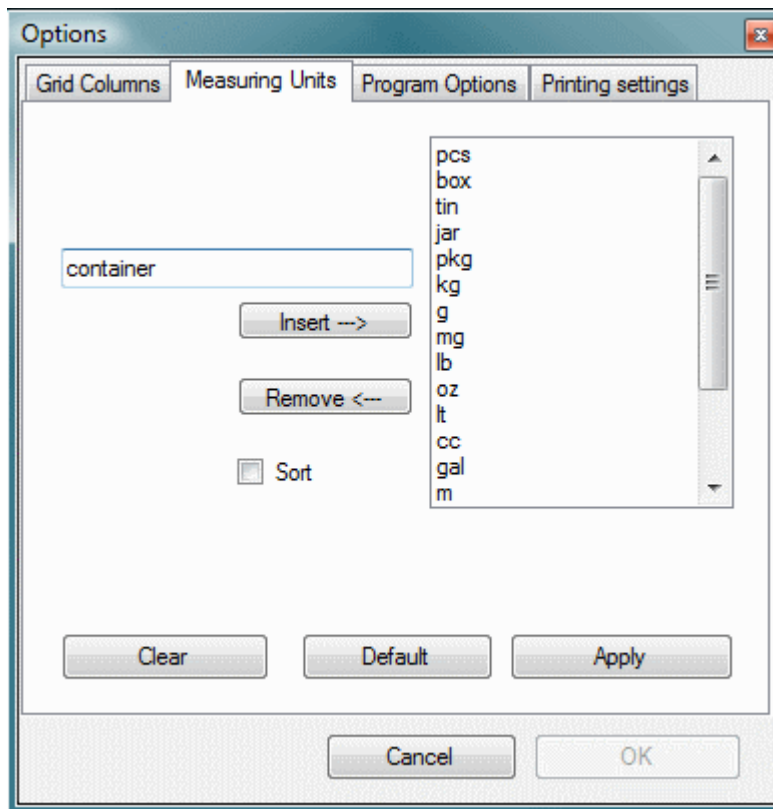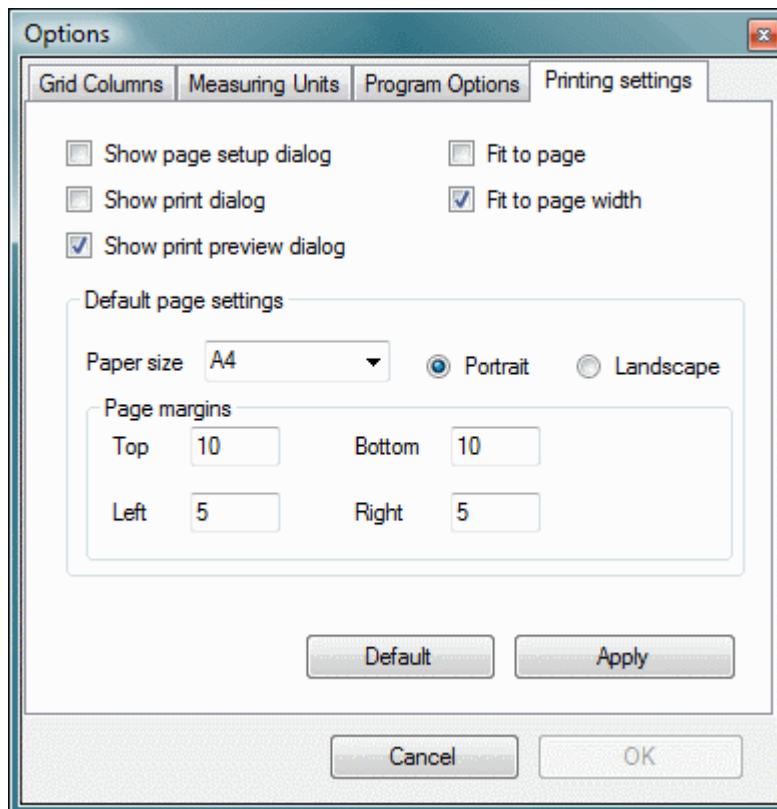
🗔 Options and settings

Options and settings

With "options and settings" you can set various preferences to suit your specific needs.

- You can set which columns you want to see in the grid
- You can define your own measuring units
- You can set a few particular program options
- You can specify the settings for the printer

You open the options window via the main menu item "Options".

Options

Grid Columns | **Measuring Units** | **Program Options** | **Printing settings**

container

Insert --->

Remove <---

☐ Sort

pcs
box
tin
jar
pkg
kg
g
mg
lb
oz
lt
cc
gal
m

Clear | Default | Apply

Cancel | OK

Options

Grid Columns | **Measuring Units** | **Program Options** | **Printing settings**

☑ Ask for confirmation before deleting items

☑ Ask for confirmation before deleting bins

☑ Ask for confirmation before deleting locations

Hotspot size

Width 20   Height 20

Clear | Default | Apply

Cancel | OK

The example above shows all tabs of the options window.

Printing

Printing the grid

You can print the contents of the items grid by clicking th "Print" button on the toolbar.

The grid will be printed according the printing settings you have made in the "Options".

Totalizing

Totals by category

Pushing the "Totals" button on the toolbar will show totals per category and grand total of the current items in the grid.

As long as the button is in the push down positions, totals will be calculated dynamically, also when the contens of the items grid changes.